

Kevin – please consider these notes as additional information related to the Governor’s Healthy Mississippi Summit, which is scheduled on Thursday, June 15, at the Downtown Marriott. Activities related to the Governor’s interest in improving health care will go beyond a one-day conference.

On Sunday, June 18, the Healthy Mississippi initiative’s faith-based component will kick off. Governor Barbour will speak at services of the lead church, Canton United Methodist Church. (The pastor is Rev. Leon Collier, 601-859-6009.) In order to address the disparities in health care in the minority population, the Governor felt it was important to start at the epicenter of the community, which is the church.

As of this time, ministers at about a dozen churches in Jackson, Cleveland, Greenville, Rosedale, and Canton will preach a biblical-based message of healthy lifestyle choices. Over time, we believe that number will grow. Here are the basic elements of a plan adopted by Canton United Methodist, which will be mirrored at other churches as part of the Healthy Mississippi concept:

The church will implement a two-fold wellness plan to (1) create awareness within the community of the burdens associated with chronic diseases and (2) to promote physical activity and good nutrition.

This is the start of a monitored lifestyle change through the pastor’s leadership.

Partnering health care community representatives will visit the church monthly to monitor participants with the overall goal of helping decrease the number of people suffering from chronic diseases.

Working with community resources, the church will sponsor monthly body mass index calculation sessions in determining healthy weight levels and identify dangers associated with obesity.

The church will sponsor health screenings for such disabling diseases as diabetes and high blood pressure.

The church will sponsor a community walk-a-thon.

The church will sponsor monthly weigh-in competition and calorie-counting activities that focus on improving food intake and nutrition practices.

These activities will take place over a period of time, hopefully leading to the Governor’s stated goal for the program: To reduce the chronic disease burden.

I’ll be happy to explore story possibilities. Thanks for your consideration.